

APPROACHES OF THE ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTIC IN KOSOVO

BACKGROUND, RESEARCHES, PUBLICATIONS

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The aim of the article on disciplinary trends in Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo is to offer an overview of folkloristic orientations and impacts related to the social and political status of Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, respectively in Kosovo. The living conditions of Albanians in some Balkan countries have affected the approaches, orientations and schools through which Albanian folklore studies have evolved. In this context, Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo differed from those in Albania during the period under communism when Yugoslavia and Albania had tense or broken diplomatic relations. In this paper, the historical background of the discipline and circumstances of Albanians living in Kosovo are presented. Both had a discernible impact on the research and publications carried out by the Folklore Department at the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina, as the only institution for the scientific research of Albanian folklore. Its research methodology, paradigms, publications as well as the status of folklore studies today provide an overview of folkloristic in Kosovo.

Keywords: *folkloristic, paradigms, folklore, methodology, Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo*

Namen članka o disciplinarnih težnjah v albanški folkloristiki na Kosovu je ponuditi pregled folklorističnih usmeritev in vplivov, povezanih z družbenim in političnim položajem kosovskih Albancev v bivši Jugoslaviji. Življenjske razmere Albancev v nekaterih državah na Balkanu so vplivale na pristope, usmeritve in šole v razvoju albanske folkloristike. V času komunizma, ko sta imeli Jugoslavija in Albanija napete ali prekinjene diplomatske stike, se je folkloristika na Kosovu razlikovala od tiste v Albaniji.

V članku je predstavljeno zgodovinsko ozadje discipline v Albaniji in življenjske okoliščine Albancev na Kosovu. Oboje je opazno vplivalo na raziskave in objave Oddelka za folkloristiko Inštituta za albanologijo v Pristini, ki je edina ustanova za znanstveno raziskovanje albanske folklore. Pogled na folkloristiko na Kosovu je ponazorjen z raziskovalno metodologijo, paradigmami, objavami in njenim današnjim položajem.

Ključne besede: *folkloristika, paradigme, folklor, metodologija, kosovski Albanci, Kosovo*

Studies of Albanian folklore in Kosovo today face challenges that elicit discussions about its research object as well as the status of Albanian folklore studies as an academic discipline. The lack of a consensual academic definition of folklore itself, with all its creative and meaningful categories and forms, in the context of the dynamics of the development of society, and which would imply the acceptance of folklore as a discipline in motion, makes Albanian folklore studies, or better to say Albanian folkloristics, still a discipline with blurred boundaries. This lack of definite status is observed in the academic world, too. The current definition of folklore as “oral literature that has to be studied first and foremost as the art of the word” (Berisha A. 2017: 191), substantiated by the philological approach; or the perspective that splits folklore into traditional and modern one and gives priority to traditional folklore, the one that is ruled by a set of classic folklore’s characteristics, such as orality, anonymity, communality, existence of versions, formulaic structure, etc. (Fetiu 2017: 190), obviously limit the expressive and explanatory potentials of folklore. These limitations develop to the viewpoint that in the face of technology, internet, and globalization there is

no condition for folklore to exist anymore. Genre theory is also regarded as an untouchable factor, recognizing the fact that folklore can exist only within the genre structure. These perspectives are known from previous decades in other schools of folklore studies in Europe and across the world, where scholars faced with dilemmas regarding the definition of folklore (cf. Ben-Amos 1971; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Dundes 2006; Hakamies 2006; Klobčar 2011; Ben-Amos 2014; Bronner 2016; Golež Kaučič 2017).

The few tendencies of recent years to see folklore as “our informal and unofficial learning about life, which we receive in everyday life, in the family, by the generations, and express more or less artistically through words, actions, behaviors” (Sims and Stephens 2005: 8), not only in oral medium but also in writing, even in electronic media, thus ensuring it the longevity (see more: Dundes 2006; Blank 2009), continue to be seen with reserve and scepticism by Albanian scholars (Fetiu 2017).

Perhaps this scepticism in accepting a more open definition of Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo is also empowered by the active coexistence of archaic forms of folklore along with new forms that come as a result of new global and technological trends. For example, in the mountainous areas of the Rugova Gorge in the Bjeshkët e Nemuna (The Damned Mountains) in the border zone with Montenegro, continues to cultivate epic singing by rhapsodists in the area (Neziri 2006), while at the same time young people in urban areas listen and perform rock, rap, rhythm and blues, and other styles of world music, often based in folkloric substrate (Dushi 2016). The constant presence of traditional anecdotes, often referred to as political and academic explanations, continues, while on the other hand the use of words of mouth in written form, in social and technological networks, or even as memes, becomes ever more useful in our daily communication (Heimo and Koski 2014; Dushi 2015a). Rites of passage even though present in the daily culture gain a new function in a modern context (Gega-Musa 2016), as well as traditional folk instruments express other symbolic aspects in new contexts of national culture (Munishi 2012).

Recent trends in Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo have noted some tendencies toward anthropological approaches. The rivalry between the two expressive worlds in the field – traditional and modern – where both coexist in Albanian culture gives the possibility of folklore having two active definitions at once – a narrow and traditional definition as well as an extended, modern and inclusive one. Those might be framed also as a philological and the anthropological one. Albanian folklorists, along with other scholars in the humanities, insist on the split expressed by these two definitions. The first one implies that folklore has finished its creative phase and therefore folkloristics as a discipline of the ‘traditional’ folklore cannot be adapted in new global trends. The contemporary definition accentuates the concept of folklore as spiritual culture and as a continuous creative process, be it individual and or collectively; transformations of folklore reflect changes of the world that surround us. Consequently, it is also accepted that the discipline should be adapt to the steady transformation of its object (Gega-Musa 2017; Dushi 2015, 2017).

This is, more or less, the conceptual situation in Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo today, but to understand it better, we must look at the circumstances of how it has developed. In this article, I will argue that the dominant paradigms in Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo depended on educational conditions and also on the political circumstances that determined Albanian society and people living in former Yugoslavia.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTIC

The Republic of Kosovo today, known in the former Yugoslavia as the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo, is inhabited by about 90% ethnic Albanians who shared the same cultural language and heritage with other Albanians living elsewhere in Yugoslavia (in the former republics of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro), but also with Albanians living in the adjacent state in Albania. Due to the tense circumstances between Yugoslavia and Albania, the Albanians living in these two states were divided by a political border, which was inaccessible to ordinary citizens,¹ until the early '90s. This fact should be taken into account when we reflect on Albanian folklore in Kosovo.

Albanian folklore studies, by definition, include research on the entire folk spirit of the Albanian nation in the diachronic and synchronic perspective, which implies the folklore of all Albanians wherever they lived and live around the world. As such, Albanian folklore study is considered to be born among Albanian Diaspora in Rome in 1635, when the Albanian Catholic clergyman Frang Bardhi (originally from Northern Albania) published a Latin-Albanian Dictionary with 113 Albanian folk proverbs which he had translated into Latin and Italian (written in Latin alphabet) (Gega-Musa 2007). Then, other publications of folklore were issued in the settlements of the Arbëresh² in Italy. Of particular importance for Albanian folklore is the year 1836 when the professor from Arbëresh College in

¹ Throughout the whole period (1948–1990) of tense relations between the Yugoslav and Albanian state, these relations were marked by unevenly intensive interruptions. Since they were influenced by local and global politics, history recognizes tensions such as the 1968 Kosovo Albanians' demonstrations with the claim to allow the use of the national Albanian flag, but also the easing period, such as inter-university exchange agreements between Pristina and Tirana in the early 1970's. The Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, which provided Kosovo with autonomy, but without the right to detach itself from Yugoslavia, signaled a new period which was manifested by openings for communication and visits between two states, although they were always heavily characterized by state operators, even when they were both family and private visits. The claim of Albanian students and intellectuals in 1981 for the sovereign Republic of Kosovo, which was followed by imprisonments and murders, and the events after 1981 resulted in tension and interruption of contacts. The main issue in strained political relations was the ethnic Albanian identity expressed by Kosovo Albanians, which the Yugoslav state tried to suppress with violence and repression.

² Arbëreshes are an Albanian ethnic and linguistic group in Southern Italy, mostly concentrated in scattered villages in the regions of Basilicata, Calabria, Molise and Sicily. They are the descendants of mostly Tosk Albanian refugees, who fled from Albania between the 14th and 18th centuries as a consequence of the Ottoman invasion on the Balkans.

Calabria, Girolamo De Rada, in Florence published the book *Rapsodie di un poema Albanese* (Rhapsody of an Arbëresh poem) with 72 folk songs from Arbëresh settlements in Naples, with an Italian translation. This publication is considered the beginning of the first great work of Albanian folklore collection (Skendi 2007: 21; Zheji 1998:16). Other publications from Albanian folklore were from Albanian settlements in Egypt (Thimi Mitko, *Bëleta shqyptare* [The Albanian Bee], 1878), in Sofia (Spiro Dine, *Valët e detit* [The waves of the sea]), and in Sarajevo (Vinçenc Prenushi *Kangë popullore gegnishte* [Folk Songs in Gheg dialect], 1911) (Skendi 2007: 25).

After the proclamation of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire, in 1912, began the state-building projects, which included also the collecting and publishing of folklore, the preparation and publication of 15 volumes with different types and genres of Albanian folklore under the title *Visaret e Kombit* (The Treasures of the Nation), which were published under the auspices of the Franciscans of Shkodra (Scadar). The compilation of these volumes was based on the comprehensive concept of Albanian folklore, which thanks to the service of the Franciscans and their associates, gathered material (Kreshnik songs/Heroic songs or songs of frontier warriors, ballads, fairy tales, lyric songs, laments, lullabies or cradle songs, as well as customs) from all areas inhabited by Albanians. *Lahuta e Kosovës* (The Lute of Kosovo) was a volume of lullabies, wedding songs, laments and heroic songs or so-called songs of manhood (Arllati 2017) collected in Kosovo.

Apart from Albanian collectors, Albanian folklore had also been published by foreign scholars, long before Albanian ones. Some of them serving as missionaries of various kinds in Albanian settlements were attracted to the beauty and distinctiveness of the Albanian folk traditions and published special works on folklore. Among these authors are the German diplomat and linguist Johann Georg von Hahn (*Albanesische Studien*, Bd. 1–3, Jena 1854; *Griechische und albanesische Märchen*, Bd. 1–2, Leipzig 1864, München/Berlin 1918; *Reise durch die Gebiete von Drin und Wardar*, Wien 1867), the French consul August Dozon (*Contes albanais, recueillis et traduits*, collected and translated, published in Paris 1881), the Danish linguist Holger Pedersen, and the scholar Maximilian Lambertz (their collected folklore material was published in Sarajevo 1917, as *Volkspoesie der Albaner: Eine einführende Studie*). The most attractive genre that excited foreign researchers was the Albanian heroic epic song, sung by the highlanders of the Northern areas of Albania and Kosovo (in Northern Albanian dialect - Gheg), and well-known as the *Cycle of Kreshnik songs*.

The first interest in this mythic cycle came from the well-known Slovenian linguist Jernej Kopitar (1780–1844) who was active in Vienna and corresponded with many scientific authorities of the time. Among European linguists, he was considered a valued scientist and thinker. In correspondence with John Baring about the publication of Clement Forie's *Modern Greek Folk Songs* (Paris, 1824–25), he wrote: "There is no doubt that Greek songs published by Forie are imitated by those of Albanians. We have to make comparisons between Albanian, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian songs. Which of these people has invented

them” (Miodrag Ibrovac³ 1966, quoted by Pllana 2004: 365). According to the same source, Kopitar had asked his student Vuk Karadžić to collect the Albanian folk songs. In 1830, Karadžić had brought twelve Albanian folk songs (along with translations into Serbian), three lyric and nine epics, he recorded two singers from Peja/Peć (Kosovo). This material was published only in 1921 by Norbert Jokl (Pllana 2004: 380).

Gustav Meyer was the first foreign (German) scholar who collected and published in Albanian a fragment (15 verses) of an Albanian song in 1897; it was published in Vienna along with other material from Albanian folklore, in his work *Albanesische Studien VI* (Neziri 1997: 25–30).

Matthias Murko (1861–1952) was a Slovenian folklore scholar who recognized the tradition of epic songs sung in Albanian but did not accept them as genuine while defending the viewpoint that they were versions of the Serbo-Croatian epic. According to Anton Berisha, who has worked on Murko’s publications of Serbo-Croatian folk epic (Berisha is refereeing to him as Czech scholar), Murko’s thoughts and data about the Albanian oral epic (which Murko referred to as a Muḥammedan tradition) although incomplete and scarce compared to the Serbian-Croatian epic, are of particular importance to Albanian historical studies because they provide ground-based evidence for the spread and foster epic songs to Albanians in the last century. The singing records and bilingual singers (in Albanian and Bosnian languages) are of unique importance for comparative studies of Balkan epics, the undeniable part of which is the Albanian versions of epic songs. Based on data found in Murko’s collection, Berisha has recognized many of these materials as Albanian, because of the Albanian ethnographic features that belonged to Arnaut and many Muslim singers, such as their traditional costumes, their memory recorded or details of their origin. As Murko wrote in 1951, “From old Serbia, only the Arnauts (Albanians) have remained illiterate, who have preserved the oral tradition very well, so they are still ‘singing for everything’ and always creating new songs” (Berisha A. 1989: 279).

Albanian epic songs were also recorded by the American researchers Milman Parry and Albert Lord, who, in search of the Homeric epic, visited the Balkans in the 1930s. In the Sandžak area in Serbia, they recorded long songs by bilingual rhapsodists (four of the five singers from whom they recorded the songs, were Albanians and one of them, Salih Ugljanin, sang in both languages (Kolsti 1990). The formulaic theory was built on the basis of the Serbian-Croatian epic, but according to David Elmer, who speaks of today’s virtual publications of Parry and Lord,

Even among the epics, which have always received more attention than anything else, scholars will find that there are significant discoveries yet to be made. Lord’s

³ Miodrag Ibrovac, *Claude Fauriel et la fortune européenne des poésies populaires greque et serbe: Étude d’histoire romantique*. Paris: Didier, 1966.

Albanian collection, which includes some of the longest Albanian epics ever recorded but remains unpublished, stands out in this regard. (Elmer 2013: 348).

When we are talking about foreign authors and their work on Albanian folklore, we cannot overlook the work that the Canadian researcher Robert Elsie did for the exposure of values of Albanian oral and textual heritage. Many of the Albanian folklore publications, included old materials from archives that he collected, translated into English, studied and published, are now accessible on his web pages,⁴ and Albanians remain indebted to Elsie for the great work he has accomplished in his short life. Elsie died on October 2, 2017.

ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTICS IN KOSOVO: BEGINNINGS, ORIENTATIONS, PUBLICATIONS

After the declaration of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and the demarcation of the borders of the state of Albania at the Conference of Ambassadors in London (1913), many settlements inhabited by a majority of ethnic Albanians were left outside the Albanian state. This also applied to Kosovo, which despite political efforts made, after the end of the Second World War continued to belong to Yugoslavia. In 1948 diplomatic relations between Albania and Yugoslavia collapsed, the border between the two states was closed, preventing any communication, even between families.

Kosovo was a country that had just emerged from the war, with a poor and uneducated population. The first post-war decades began with great hardships. The lack of high schools and universities meant that the first scholars had to study in Belgrade, and later in Zagreb and Ljubljana until the University of Prishtina was opened in 1970. While first generations of Kosovo students from the technical and medical sciences studied in Zagreb and Ljubljana, most of the social science students were educated in Belgrade. Scholars of linguistics and literature, or of philosophy, were the beginners of folklore studies in Kosovo. The collecting of folklore, initially of folk songs about national heroic figures, fairy tales and anecdotes, was carried out by students who had completed their studies in Belgrade at the Faculty of Philosophy.

Albanian folklore materials in Kosovo first started to be published in the daily newspaper *Rilindja*, but also in periodical journals. A book with folk songs from different regions of Kosovo, entitled *Kangë popullore shqiptare të Kosovës dhe Metohisë* (The Albanian folk songs from Kosovo and Metohia), which were collected by Albanian philologist Zekeria Rexha (educated in Tirana, Paris and Belgrade), was published in Prishtina in 1951, but because of historical songs that were judged to inspire nationalistic sentiments of one nation

⁴ Robert Elsie, <http://www.elsie.de>, 20. 12. 2018; Robert Elsie, Texts and Documents of Albanian History, <http://www.albanianhistory.net> (accessed 20. 12. 2018).

against another, all three thousand copies were destroyed immediately after the release and the author was deported to Albania (Shita 2007). Subsequently, three other authors, two Albanian students with their professor from Belgrade, took some of these materials, removed the “dangerous” songs by adding many other genres of folk songs, and published them in three volumes with the same title in 1952 (Dançetović et al. 1952). The publication is considered to be the first volume of Albanian folkloristics published in Kosovo.

In the same year (1953), the Institute of Albanology was established in Prishtina. This was an institution where the language, literature, history and culture of Kosovo Albanians would be collected, studied, and published. In 1955, in unfavorable circumstances for Albanians in Kosovo (there were discriminatory policies against the Albanian population forcing them to declare as Turks, therefore to migrate to Turkey (see more: Grmek, Gjidara and Šimac 2010: 156–195), the Institute of Albanology was closed. After 12 years, the situation changed and new political circumstances helped in the reopening of the Institute of Albanology (1967) and then the opening of the University of Prishtina (1970). In 1970, the Folklore Department was established at the Institute headed by Professor Anton Çetta (1920–1995). Çetta completed his elementary and secondary education in Albania and graduated in Romanian philology at the University of Belgrade. Besides, he was lecturing on Albanian literature, the history of literature, and Latin language at the University of Prishtina.

Çetta is considered to be the founder of Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo. When he took on the task of founding the Folklore Department at the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina, the “fount of folk literature was thought to be something abstract and that how much of this treasure existed in the field, was unknown” (Berisha Rr. 2011: 142). Çetta forged the project to collect and publish twenty-eight volumes of various genres of folk literature, which the Folklore Department would prepare. At the end of the 1960s, this was the primary task of the Department since folkloristics as a discipline was incomprehensible without the grounding of folklore material in the archives. To accomplish this task, Çetta first gathered colleagues within the Department and then established a network of external collaborators, mainly his former students and scholars, who researched folk material and deposited it in the Department (Mustafa 2011: 127). Nearly thirty volumes of collected materials, assembled by genres, were published, mostly edited by Çetta, his colleagues and collaborators: *Këngë kreshnike* (Kreshnik Songs or Songs of Frontier Warriors) (Çetta 1974a; Berisha Rr. et al. 1991; Çetta et al. 1993), *Këngë epike legjendare* (Legendary Epic Songs) (Neziri 1997, 2009, 2011), *Balada dhe Legjenda* (Ballads and Legends) (Çetta 1974), *Këngë popullore historike I–IV* (Historical Folk Songs I–IV) from different periods (Pllana et al. 1978; Sylja 1982; Fetiu et al. 2007; Berisha Rr. et al. 2007; Sylja et al. 2007; Zejnullahu et al. 2007), *Këngë dasme* (Lyric Wedding Songs) (Çetta and Berisha A. 1982, 1984; Rukiqi 2009); *Këngë dashurie* (Lyric Love Songs) (Mustafa and Berisha Rr. 1979; Berisha Rr. and Mustafa 1987), *Këngë dhe lojëra të fëmijëve* (Children’s Songs and Games) (Fetiu 1983), *Ninulla* (Lullabies) (Fetiu 1982), *Vajtime* (Laments) (Çetta and Berisha A. 1987; Ulaj 2009);

Përralla (Fairytale) (Çetta 1979, 1982), *Balada dhe legjenda* (Ballads and Legends) (Çetta 1974b), *Kallëzime* (Folk Tales) (Mustafa 1987), *Anekdotat* (Anecdotes) (Çetta et al. 1987, 1988); *Fabula* (Fables) (Mustafa and Zejnullahu 2008), and other short forms of oral prose (Kajtazi 2015; Çetta 1995, 2000, 2001; Ulaj 2011). All collected materials and the listed publications were organized according to the genre system (Honko 1976). The focus was text, not voice or performance. The material was recorded by reel-to-reel audio tape recording (Uher brand), then the sound material was transcribed, but only texts were published. Every volume, in the end, was supplied with some tables with data about the performers and the collector. So, considering the time when the folklore paradigm was “the text is king” (Honko 2000: 7), volumes of the texts of songs and narratives were published. Folklore material has been collected in all areas where Albanians lived in the former Yugoslavia, and also in Albania as well as in Albanian diaspora in Italy and Greece. Publication of sound materials was not applicable. For various reasons, the publication of these volumes took four decades. The published collections of Albanian folklore served as a solid base for the next phase, i. e., the analysis and the study of collected and published folk genres.

A sub-branch of the Folklore department was always the ethnomusicology branch. Collected folklore materials were treated from the melodic and ethnomusicological aspect. For ethnomusicologists, mostly folk instruments as well as folk festivals, and the typical ways of folk singing from different regions were the main topics (Munishi 1979, 1987). Their special focus was also the choral music of Albanians (Munishi 1988).

The 1974 Constitution guaranteed Kosovo autonomy within the Social Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It facilitated Kosovo Albanians to develop the study of their national culture. Many more students had the chance to complete their higher education inside and outside Yugoslavia and to participate in the international conferences. Contacts with international literature and folklore scholars resulted in a substantial intellectual work of Albania scholars in Kosovo, who published a number of books on poetics of genres, previously published in Albanian folklore volumes. The titles of these Albanian publications are *Poetika e baladës popullore shqiptare* (The Poetics of Albanian Folk Ballad) (Fetiu 1987), *Poetika e lirikës popullore shqiptare* (The Poetics of Albanian Folk Lyric) (Vinca 1989), *Përralla shqiptare – poetika dhe mitikja* (The Poetics of Albanian Fairy Tale) (Mustafa 2003), *Qasje poetikës së letërsisë gojore shqipe* (Approaching the Poetics of Albanian Oral Literature) (Berisha A. 1997), *Poetika e krahasimit* (The Poetics of Stylistic Figure of Comparison in Albanian folk lyric) (Neziri 2004), *Poetika e Gjëgjëzës* (The Poetics of Riddle) (Gega-Musa 2009), along with other poetical issues upon historical folk songs (Zejnullahu 1987; Syla 1982).

Articles on folklore were published regularly in the academic journal *Gjurmime Albanologjike* (Albanological Research) issued by the Institute of Albanology from 1971 in three collections (Philology, History, and Folklore & Ethnology). Albanian folklore studies grew with this journal. The articles published in *Gjurmime* treated folklore analytically. The individual was considered as a bearer of tradition while his art was qualified as a treasure of national culture and heritage. So far there are 48 published volumes of the journal.

Theories and methods of research used in these study papers corresponded with folkloristic publications issued in other republics of Yugoslavia, which regularly came to the Library of the Institute of Albanology. Authors whose works were known among Albanian folklorists of Kosovo were Maja Bošković-Stulli, Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin, Zdenko Škreb, Zdeslav Dukat, Novak Kilibarda, Hatidža Krnjević, Mira Sertić, Tvrtko Čubelić, Vojislav Đurić, Milivoje Ristić, Jovan Brkić, Radoslav Medenica, Danko Horvat, Vladimir Biti and others, along with authors translated into Serbo-Croatian language, such as Vladimir Propp, Max Lüthi, Bruno Bettelheim, André Jolles, Eleazar Meletinski, William Bascom, Giuseppe Cocchiara, Roman Jakobson and Peter Bogatyrev, George Frazer. Publications of Antti and Arne, Stith Thompson, Richard Dorson, Alan Dundes, Linda Dégh and some others were available in English. However, there were very few folklorists who referred to English or German literature.

In the context of developments of Kosovo Albanian folkloristics within the Yugoslav area, the organization of the 20th Congress of the Association of Yugoslav Folklorists which was held on 24-28 September 1986 in Prishtina should be mentioned. Under the auspices of Albanian folklorist professor Shefqet Pllana and the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Prishtina, this congress brought together about 200 folklore scholars from Yugoslavia, Europe and the world. According to Enver Mehmeti's chronicle, the two main topics of the congress were "Folklore of Kosovo" and "Continuity and Changes in Folk Creativity", while the themes of the sections were related to the epic of the South Slavs and the Albanian epic as well as various theoretical aspects and practice of folk literature classification. Other topics included issues of ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology and children's folklore. The special topics of these sessions were the comparative themes from the Albanian and Serbo-Croatian epic, the ballads of the Yugoslav peoples as well as the topics of the classification of the categories of folklore (Mehmeti 1987: 221–222). Even though this Congress was considered a special event and a great achievement of Prishtina University and Kosovo in general, the contributions from this conference were never published. The changes that followed briefly in Kosovo, as well as the drastic changes that faced the University of Prishtina soon, seem to have left their mark on the finalization of the Congress proceedings, which was almost the last that was organized in ex-Yugoslavia.

THE PARADIGMS OF THE ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTICS IN KOSOVO

Based on the work that has been done and the works that Albanian folklore scholars published to date, we see that Albanian folkloristics at its institutional level resulted in two types of work:

- publications of textual folk units – twenty-eight volumes, based on folk genre, and
- monographs on the poetics of these units, in particular, also known as the philological approach.

By the end of the 20th century, the approach to folklore as the art of speech, which governed the study of its poetic aspects, characterized substantially the concept of Albanian folklore in Kosovo. According to the Albanian literary critic Arben Hoxha, the research paradigms that characterized Albanian folkloristic from the epistemological point of view could be discerned at two levels (in terms of theory of knowledge): the pre-gnostic level, which mainly focused on the proof of the existence of facts, data and folk materials; and the gnostic level. In the pre-gnostic framework, the collected and published material was a function of the idea for evidencing the facts emanating from empirical data, while the following epistemic step consisted in the idea of building a theoretical framework applicable to research folklore as a separate entity of intangible heritage of the Albanian nation in its thematic, formal, structural, stylistic, compositional, but also geographic dimension. According to the same author, the pre-gnostic level was based on the positivistic-empiricist method, while the gnostic level in the structural-objectivistic method aimed at the constant of a genre, so the notion of poetics was the one that covered the concepts, categories and instruments of positivistic recognition in Albanian folkloristic (Hoxha 2014: 393–407).

The mentioned epistemic levels have characterized the development of folklore studies in Albania, too, which was the most important referential frame for Kosovo scholars for many years. The unfeasible communication with their colleagues (except in exclusively official cases) as well as high obstacles for providing literature published in Albania, made it difficult to follow folklore studies publications there. Rare books from Albania were smuggled into Kosovo under the great scrutiny of the state security authorities of both states. On both sides, research and fieldwork across border areas were prohibited (Dushi 2013: 50–56). This ban obviously influenced the development of a more powerful theme of the national dream that is evidenced in the Albanian folklore that was created in Kosovo. It resulted in the elevation of historical figures to the extent of glorification, with the ideals of national essence. Due to the sensitivity of the historical topics, four volumes of the historical folk songs, prepared by a group of scholars from the Department of Folklore at the Institute of Albanology were not published until 2007 (Fetiu et al. 2007).

The publication of historical folk songs, as well as heroic songs before the war in 1999, was seen as nationalistic activity against the Serbian regime that had captured Kosovo. The political circumstances directly affected the development of Albanian folklore studies in Kosovo. Albanian folkloristics in Kosovo made progress until the beginning of the 1990s when it started to decline. During a decade after 1989, Albanians faced very difficult times and their very existence was threatened by the Milošević regime. Kosovo's autonomy was revoked; Albanians were excluded from all levels of education, health services, and government jobs. This meant the interruption of all academic activities. Folklorists together with their colleagues were expelled from the building of the Institute of Albanology. Like all other educators and researchers, they decided to organize their work privately, but because the state left them without financing they were forced to raise funds, a very difficult task in those circumstances. At a time when their existence was in jeopardy, folklorists published

only some small issues of the annual Journal of Albanological Research, made possible by financial assistance from Kosovo diaspora in Europe and the United States. In those difficult years, folklorists could only transcribe and edit collected materials, the only work they could do in closed environments. Fieldwork was impossible due to lack of finances and dangers outside the facility.

Another problem was the difficulty of supplying literature because collaborations with libraries and bookstores were discontinued. Contacts and cooperation with institutions and institutes in the former Yugoslavia were completely interrupted. The separation of Kosovo from the Yugoslav state meant also the disappearance of Kosovo folkloristic publications from this network. Publishing was to a certain extent ensured on an individual basis and in illegal forms, according to the existing state rules.

On the other hand, the dissolution of Yugoslavia on an ethnic basis, which resulted in the suspension of internal institutional relations, paved the way for new ethnic contacts among Albanians. The collapse of communism in Albania in the early 1990s and then the mass deportation of the Kosovo Albanian population during the 1999 war (then a million Albanians were violently forced to leave their country by Serbian paramilitary forces and to seek accommodation in Albania and Macedonia), facilitated the establishment of contacts within the Albanian population outside the borders of Kosovo. Especially the contacts with Albania were dormant for almost half a century, and it was not easy to establish communication at once. The meetings between acquaintances, as well as the meeting between people who were unknown to each other, caused great cultural shock. As has been said many times, wars, tragedies and disasters are the most powerful sources for folklore creativity.

The Institute of Folk Culture in Tirana – together with colleagues from Kosovo – initiated a research project aimed at exploring the *Cultural Survival of the Deported Albanians*, which took place in two phases: when deported Kosovars were refugees in Albania and later when they returned to their homes in Kosovo. Many colleagues from both sides of the border, who until then had heard of or had a chance to read each other, got now acquainted with each other, but they also got involved in fieldwork they had only heard about from previous generations. Among scholars in Kosovo fieldwork needed time to become again a regular part of the scholarship. Based on fieldwork a volume on Hasi⁵ region was published under the title *Tradita kulturore e Hasit* (Cultural Tradition of Hasi) and was completed by collecting works of folklorists and ethnographers from Kosovo and Albania, who carried out collaborative research in the region (Fetiu et al. 2005).

After the 2000s, the circumstances and opportunities for Kosovo citizens to travel changed thanks to the assistance provided by the developed countries of Europe and the USA, not only for food and shelter but also for educational needs. Various academic foundations facilitated the professional rehabilitation of scholars from Pristina University

⁵ Hasi region is settled between Albania and Kosovo. The state border divided the region for almost half a century.

and supported them to take up specialized positions in similar institutions abroad. Thus members of academic staff from Kosovo were rehabilitated and had the opportunity to get acquainted with and tracking the academic trends in Europe and beyond.

In these circumstances, I had the opportunity to undertake specializations at some universities abroad, but here I wish to emphasize what gave orientation to my research and studies of Albanian folklore in general. During the research visit that I made to Finland in the Folkloristic department of the University of Turku in 2002, I was inspired by new approaches to oral culture that I did not know before. Recognition of new methods and methodologies, as well as the possibility of coming into contact with texts and authors, brought me to the method of oral history and its potential in folklore. Conceiving of folklore as the entirety of expression and cultural conduct based in tradition and taking place in everyday practice, stipulated the explanation of many past events, as well as many practices, not only oral genres. My previous knowledge on folklore as folk traditional knowledge, based on the genre system, clashed with this new understanding which gave me a wider competence for studying folklore. I soon realized that it expanded my knowledge base on new types of folklore in Albanian fieldwork, unknown in Albanian folkloristics. Thus, my next project was the introduction and research of oral personal narrative as an oral genre in Albanian folklore. Researching and discovering the personal stories that field subjects kindly offered even when the folklorist sought other types of tradition, was an experience that my international colleagues had had before me (Hakamies 2006). This genre contained creative narrative, the alleged truthfulness, the narrator's persona in the form – "I report", but with an apparent presence of tradition as the memory of generations in the type "had told me ..." These notions existed in Albanian folklore but I had to fit them into a theoretical genre, and I achieved this by combining contemporary theories from European and American folkloristic schools with materials from my local fieldwork. The use of oral history method in folklore studies was a novelty, not very widely accepted when this study was published in 2009 (Dushi 2009) but today it is increasingly being applied to research and studies from other humanities in Kosovo.

I returned to Turku for my post-doctoral studies in 2011/2012, where I gained knowledge of new approaches in folkloristics. Memory studies opened new perspectives. The other research project, which is related to trends in new research in Albanian folklore studies, was focused on personal stories of inhabitants of the border areas with Albania. Those stories were followed over three generations and testify to an intergenerational memory of the consequences and damages inflicted to ethnic Albanian families, culture and society caused by the political border. Through these narratives, I have succeeded in supplying the emotional side of history, which nobody could dare tell of at the time when they happened. The borderline can be seen symbolically in each sentence of these narrators, where the presence of division comes into their thoughts and emotions, into their narratives. Theoretical studies on borders and memory as well as anthropological approaches to folklore give me the opportunity to shed some light on some concealed issues of this border.

The contacts and collaboration between the folklore institutes in Tirana and Prishtina, as well as with Albanians in Macedonia and Montenegro, are free and unobstructed today, enabling joint research and joint conferences. Publications and collaboration have replaced isolation and ex-communication, and today Albanian folklorists in the Balkans jointly aim for Europe. They are now able to participate in international conferences. Alongside other scholars, they are representatives of the national folklore studies of their respective countries and cultures. In recent years, Albanian folklorists from Kosovo, have started to be present in international publications as well. Today there are tendencies among folklore scholars (very few in number) to see folklore as being related to other disciplines, which helps them to expand the boundaries of the folklore concept and work with new approaches. The use of literature in foreign languages today opens up new perspectives to Albanian folklore, encouraging folklorists to do research online and in social networks. This is a new approach that classic folklorists consider as non-folklore, insisting on the old canon that folklore cannot be created outside of the village and much less in written form.

THE STATUS OF ALBANIAN FOLKLORISTICS TODAY

Over the last few years, there is an openness of Albanian folklore research and studies to new approaches and methods, but also a growing presence of Albanian folkloristics in international conferences and publications. There is still much work to be done, but Albanian folklorists have started to be represented in international organizations such as SIEF, InASEA, Ballad Commission, ISFNR, the Finnish Folklore Fellows. They are few, but their international networking marks an opening for Kosovo Albanian folklore studies where they can be presented as an autonomous entity. In 2015, an important event was the organization of the 45th conference of the International Ballad Commission (Kommission für Volksdichtung) in Prishtina, titled *Parallel Words in Ballad and Folk Songs*. Its proceedings were published in 2017 (Neziri 2017). Besides, two international conferences on Albanian Epics were organized; paper presentations were followed by a visit to rhapsodist while performing live in the mountainous area. Along with some international participants, there were many folklorists from all Albanian-speaking regions, who treated the epic performances analytically. The aim of this conference was also the first step for the nomination proposal of the Albanian Heroic Cycle for the UNESCO List of intangible cultural heritage.

Today, the Department of Folklore at the Institute of Albanology in Prishtina employs eight scholars, three of whom are ethnomusicologists, and all carry-out research projects which give a new opportunity to Albanian folklore research. The treatment of oral narratives from the perspective of social and collective memory, but also with the oral history method, is giving a new perspective to Albanian folklore. Research on the rites of passage and family rituals from the anthropological perspective is enriching the possibility of

deconstructing and understanding these vital processes as manifested and stratified in the cultural heritage in general, and folklore in particular. Handling folk songs and ritual year ceremonies not just as a text or melody, but also as a context and textures, while giving the ability to analyze performance as a whole, with all its circumferential elements, is also opening folklore to other disciplines. Adopting new concepts such as “written folklore”, “digital folklore” or the “folklore of mass media” is giving the first results of Albanian folklore research and studies in Kosovo.

By expanding the boundaries of the classical definition, thanks to new theoretical insights, fresh interpretation and interdisciplinary cooperation, folklorists are pushing their discipline forward. This is also achieved through their participation in international associations and organizations of the professional fields, but mostly through presentations of research results and Albanian folklore in international conferences, where Kosovo and the folklore created here are represented by Kosovo Albanian scholars, rather than their neighbors, as it has been practiced until recently.

The regular participation of folklorists from Kosovo at the annual international conferences of the International Ballad Commission, biennial conference of the International Association for Southeast European Anthropology, folklore conferences in Macedonia and Bulgaria, oral history conference in Finland as well as in the Baltic countries, even as guest lecturers in regional conferences have made Kosovo visible on the academic map of Europe. Also, the professional education of ethnomusicologists in Turkey and Bulgaria, where they are focusing on specialized musical heritage issues, creates new potential for Albanian folklore studies. Such circumstances of folkloristics are very encouraging, although this work still requires a lot of commitment, dedication, seriousness, and material support from state institutions. Also, Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo still needs to be involved in wider projects in the region, as well as in Europe. Folklore studies continue to need a greater presence in the academic programs within the country, to have the opportunity to instruct future folklorists from the basis, from the bachelor level, where they may define their folkloristic orientation.

To conclude, in the wake of research and studies that take place today on Albanian folklore in Kosovo, folklorists no longer have to risk of their physical existence but face another challenge: the lack of a conceptualized system of their discipline. Folkloristics along with all the history in Albanian studies is endangered of being dissolved into cultural and social anthropology, the disciplines that run every day to dominate both as denominations and methodologies, and for the fact that they represent a modern academic trend. The lack of folkloristic presence in academic programs is another peril that does not facilitate the professional training of young folklorists. If such trends continue, Albanian folkloristic in Kosovo is likely to become a sub-discipline within anthropological or cultural studies. This will force folklore studies to change the name of the discipline and this may not always be congenial. But it looks like this will be another form of survival, alongside another paradigm shift that is being seen on the horizon.

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PRISTOPI V ALBANSKI FOLKLORISTIKI NA KOSOVU: OZADJE, RAZISKAVE, OBJAVE

Članek o albanski folkloristiki na Kosovu ponazarja njen razvoj s predstavitvijo njenih usmeritev, na katere je vplival družbeni in politični položaj kosovskih Albancev v bivši Jugoslaviji. Tudi drugače je življenje Albancev v nekaterih balkanskih državah vplivalo na pristope, usmeritve in šole, s katerimi se je oblikovala albanska folkloristika. V času komunizma, ko sta imeli Jugoslavija in Albanija napete ali prekinjene diplomatske stike, se je folkloristika na Kosovu razlikovala od tiste v Albaniji.

Od konca 2. svetovne vojne do 90. let prejšnjega stoletja so albansko folkloro iz vse Jugoslavije zbirali in preučevali na Kosovu. To je omogočilo stike in sodelovanje s šolami in usmeritvami, uveljavljenimi v folkloristiki pri drugih narodih v Jugoslaviji in širše, kar pa ne velja za folkloristiko v Albaniji. Znanstvena komunikacija z Albanijo je bila mogoča šele v 90. letih, vendar so jo spremljale okoliščine, ki so vplivale na fizični obstoj albanskega naroda na Kosovu. Z vidika folkloristike je to prineslo čas stagnacije. Tako za folkloriste kakor tudi vse prebivalstvo je bila glavna skrb preživetje. Albanskim folkloristom na Kosovu se je takrat z donacijami albanske diaspore v Evropi posrečilo izdati le nekaj zvezkov znanstvenega časopisa.

Po letu 2000 so se razmere in priložnosti za razvoj preučevanja albanske folklore na Kosovu povsem spremenile. To ni bila le priložnost za odprtost do drugih Albancev na Balkanu, temveč tudi za seznanitev s težnjami in perspektivami v folkloristiki po Evropi. V tem srečanju se je folkloristika na Kosovu spoprijela s premiki in ločnicami folkloristike kot discipline in tudi z družbeno in kulturno antropologijo, kar je bilo tudi sicer značilno za druge znanstvene tradicije v Evropi.

V članku avtorica predstavlja zgodovinsko ozadje discipline v Albaniji in življenjske okoliščine Albancev na Kosovu. Oboje je opazno vplivalo tudi na raziskave in objave Oddelka za folkloristiko v Inštitutu za albanologijo v Prishtini, ki je edina ustanova za znanstveno raziskovanje albanske folklore. Pogled na folkloristiko na Kosovu je ponazorjen z raziskovalno metodologijo, paradigmami, objavami in njenim današnjim položajem.

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